

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

precise words: carefully chosen words or phrases with clear meanings, including specific or proper nouns, vivid verbs, and spare use of adjectives and adverbs

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: As you write and revise, use your five senses. Ask yourself whether your words are the best ones to present a vivid and accurate picture of your topic and point of view. Can readers “see” what you mean?

EXAMPLE The dog walked down the bad road.

Step 2: Underline vague language. Look for boring, or imprecise nouns, verbs, and modifiers in your first draft.

EXAMPLE The dog walked down the bad road.

Step 3: Evaluate each underlined word. Eliminate unnecessary words and think of more precise words to replace others. Choose a word that works best for the mood and scene you want to convey. Revise your writing using the more precise words.

- **Eliminate such vague words as:** *good, cool, bad, interesting, things, stuff, many, few, some, people, very, really.*
- **Eliminate adverbs and adjectives, and strengthen the noun or verb.** Instead of “The dog barked menacingly,” say “The Doberman snarled and growled.”
- **Occasionally add an adjective or adverb** that evokes an image, such as specific colors, textures, flavors, measurements, time periods.

Step 4: Have a reader ask clarifying questions. A reader can help you with your final revision by reading your work silently or aloud and asking you questions about parts of your writing that seem unclear.

EXAMPLE How old was the dog? How did he sound? Why was the road bad?

EXAMPLE The German Shepherd hobbled down the garbage-strewn alley.